

How soon after an exposure to HIV can an HIV test detect if I am infected?

No HIV test can detect HIV immediately after infection. If you think you've been exposed to HIV, talk to your health care provider as soon as possible.

The time between when a person gets HIV and when a test can accurately detect it is called the *window period*. The window period varies from person to person and also depends upon the type of HIV test.

- Most HIV tests are **antibody tests**. Antibodies are produced by your immune system when you're exposed to viruses like HIV or bacteria. HIV antibody tests look for these antibodies to HIV in your blood or oral fluid.

The soonest an antibody test will detect infection is 3 weeks. Most (approximately 97%), but not all, people will develop detectable antibodies within 3 to 12 weeks (21 to 84 days) of infection.

Ask your health care provider about the window period for the test you're taking. If you're using a home test, you can get that information from the materials included in the test's package. If you get an HIV test within 3 months after a potential HIV exposure and the result is negative, get tested again in 3 more months to be sure.

If you learned you were HIV-negative the last time you were tested, you can only be sure you're still negative if you haven't had a potential HIV exposure since your last test. If you're sexually active, continue to [take actions to prevent HIV](#), like using condoms the right way every time you have sex and [taking medicines](#) to prevent HIV if you're at high risk.